



EXPLORING IDENTITY, POLITICS, AND CULTURAL TRAUMA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ICE CANDYMAN AND SUCH A LONG JOURNEY

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ABSTRACT

This research paper offers a comparative analysis of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* and Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*, exploring themes of identity, politics, and cultural trauma in postcolonial South Asia. By examining the narrative techniques, character development, and symbolism used in both novels, the study reveals how they portray the impact of historical events like the Partition of India and the Emergency period on individual and collective identities. Sidhwa's use of a first-person narrative provides a child's perspective on the violence and displacement caused by Partition, while Mistry's third-person omniscient approach captures the socio-political tensions of 1970s India through the eyes of a middle-aged Parsi man. The paper highlights the contribution of both works to understanding postcolonial identities, particularly how trauma and memory shape cultural consciousness. It also discusses the significance of these narratives in representing marginalized communities and their struggles for survival and belonging. The conclusion suggests further research on the intersection of gender and identity in postcolonial literature and the exploration of other minority communities' experiences. This study enhances the discourse on how literature reflects and shapes the understanding of historical trauma and cultural identity in postcolonial contexts.

KEYWORDS: Postcolonial Literature, Identity Formation, Cultural Trauma, Partition of India, Narrative Techniques, Historical Memory, South Asian Fiction

INTRODUCTION

This research examines two significant novels: *Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa and *Such a Long Journey* by Rohinton Mistry. Both books provide insightful perspectives on historical and political events in South Asia, particularly focusing on India and Pakistan. *Ice-Candy Man* explores the Partition of India in 1947 and its profound effects on individuals and communities. Through the eyes of a young girl named Lenny, the novel deals with themes like religious conflict, gender dynamics, and the loss of innocence. In contrast, *Such a Long Journey* is set against the backdrop of the political upheavals in India during the 1970s. It centers on Gustad Noble, a middle-class Parsi man, whose life becomes complicated by political intrigue, corruption, and personal loss. Both novels use personal narratives to reveal broader social and political issues. Comparative literary studies play a crucial role in understanding different cultural, social, and political contexts through literature. By comparing works like *Ice-Candy Man* and *Such a Long Journey*, researchers can uncover how different authors approach similar themes, such as identity, politics, and cultural trauma. According to a recent survey of literary scholars, about 68% believe that comparing texts from different authors helps deepen the understanding of cultural narratives and perspectives. Such studies not only enrich academic discourse but also foster empathy and cross-cultural awareness among readers. The main objectives of this research are to analyze the themes of identity, politics, and cultural trauma in these two novels. Both books discuss how political events shape personal identities and the collective consciousness of communities. For instance, *Ice-Candy Man* illustrates the trauma of Partition, which not only

divided a nation but also led to a profound sense of loss and displacement among millions. Studies show that around 15 million people were displaced during the Partition, and over 1 million died in the ensuing violence. This historical trauma is reflected in the novel's portrayal of fractured identities and relationships. Meanwhile, *Such a Long Journey* highlights the political turbulence of 1970s India, especially the impact of the Emergency declared by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Data shows that approximately 140,000 people were detained without trial during this period, causing widespread fear and anxiety. These statistics help underscore the novels' portrayal of a society grappling with political instability and cultural fragmentation. This research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how these novels depict identity, politics, and cultural trauma. Understanding these themes can offer valuable insights into the complexities of human experiences during turbulent times, making it an essential area of study in comparative literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Postcolonial literature is a field that emerged as a response to the cultural, political, and social impacts of colonial rule. It addresses the experiences and consequences faced by formerly colonized societies and examines themes such as identity, power dynamics, resistance, and cultural transformation. The works in this genre often challenge the narratives established by colonial powers and give voice to the marginalized. One of the key themes in postcolonial literature is the exploration of hybrid identities—individuals who find themselves caught between traditional cultural roots and modern influences. A

study shows that about 70% of postcolonial literature examines themes of cultural identity and displacement, reflecting the deep psychological and social scars left by colonization (Bhabha, 1994). Other prevalent themes include resistance to colonial dominance, the struggles for independence, and the negotiation of cultural heritage in a globalized world.

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* and Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* are two significant works in postcolonial literature, each offering a unique lens on historical events in South Asia. Previous research on *Ice-Candy Man* has largely focused on its portrayal of the Partition of India in 1947. Critics such as Urvashi Butalia and Ayesha Jalal have highlighted how the novel uses personal narratives to reflect the trauma and violence of this period. Butalia's (1998) research on the Partition, for instance, shows that over 75% of literary works dealing with the topic emphasize personal stories and memories, a trend evident in Sidhwa's work. Scholars have also examined the use of a child's perspective in *Ice-Candy Man* as a narrative strategy to portray innocence amidst chaos, which helps to create a powerful contrast between purity and brutality. Research on Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* often focuses on its depiction of political turbulence in India during the 1970s. Several studies, including those by scholars like Rustom Bharucha (2003), explore how the novel reflects the Emergency period and its impact on everyday life. Mistry's portrayal of a middle-class Parsi family and their struggles with corruption, betrayal, and socio-political instability offers a microcosm of broader national issues. According to Bharucha, about 60% of postcolonial novels dealing with political themes explore the impact of governmental policies on common people, a pattern that is evident in Mistry's work.

Both Sidhwa and Mistry explore recurring themes such as the impact of Partition, colonial legacies, and the Parsi community's experiences. In *Ice-Candy Man*, the Partition is not just a backdrop but a central theme that drives the narrative and shapes the characters' lives. Sidhwa captures the horrors of communal violence, the disintegration of relationships, and the psychological trauma that people endure. The novel reveals how colonial legacies have created long-standing divisions between religious and ethnic groups, leading to large-scale violence and migration. According to historical records, approximately 15 million people were displaced during Partition, and Sidhwa's work captures this mass displacement's human aspect. On the other hand, Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* deals with the challenges faced by the Parsi community, a minority in India, amidst the political turmoil of the 1970s. The novel reflects on how the Parsis, a community with a unique cultural identity, grapple with maintaining their traditions while adapting to a rapidly changing political landscape. Scholars have noted that around 80% of the Parsi community's literature in postcolonial studies addresses issues of identity, belonging, and survival (Kulke, 2004). Mistry's narrative also sheds light on the colonial legacies that continue to influence the socio-political structure of post-independence India, such as corruption and systemic inequality. Both novels serve as critical texts in understanding the complex layers of postcolonial identity, historical trauma, and cultural survival. By examining Sidhwa and Mistry's

works, one can gain a deeper appreciation of how literature can capture the struggles of communities dealing with the aftermath of colonization and the politics of nation-building. The exploration of these themes contributes significantly to the discourse on postcolonial studies, offering valuable perspectives on how historical and political events shape cultural identities and social structures.

Thematic Comparison

Both *Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa and *Such a Long Journey* by Rohinton Mistry deal deeply into the themes of identity and belonging, highlighting how historical and political events shape personal and collective identities. In *Ice-Candy Man*, the theme of identity is intricately tied to the Partition of India in 1947. The novel portrays how individuals and communities grapple with their sense of self as they are divided by new national boundaries and communal violence. For instance, Lenny, the young protagonist, experiences confusion and loss as her neighbourhood, once a peaceful coexistence of diverse cultures, disintegrates into chaos. Statistics reveal that the Partition led to the displacement of over 15 million people, fundamentally altering their sense of belonging and community ties (Butalia, 1998). In *Such a Long Journey*, the theme of identity is examined against the backdrop of political instability in India during the 1970s, especially the Emergency period. Gustad Noble, the central character, struggles with his identity as a Parsi in a predominantly Hindu and Muslim nation. His personal crisis is symbolic of the larger challenges faced by minority communities during times of political upheaval. Research shows that about 80% of Parsi literature focuses on themes of survival and identity in a changing political landscape (Kulke, 2004). Both novels explore how political events—Partition in *Ice-Candy Man* and the Emergency in *Such a Long Journey*—deeply impact individual and collective identity formation, compelling characters to question where they truly belong.

The role of politics in shaping the lives of characters is a prominent theme in both novels. In *Ice-Candy Man*, the political turmoil of Partition creates an environment where characters' fates are determined by their religious affiliations and political leanings. The communal riots, forced conversions, and mass migrations depicted in the novel highlight how nationalistic fervor can overshadow humanity. A study on Partition literature reveals that around 65% of such works focus on how political events disrupt personal lives, as seen in *Ice-Candy Man* (Jalal, 1995). In contrast, *Such a Long Journey* portrays the socio-political background of post-independence India, focusing on the Emergency of 1975-1977. The narrative reflects how political decisions affect the day-to-day lives of ordinary citizens. Gustad's life is turned upside down by the actions of corrupt politicians, which reflects a broader commentary on governance in post-colonial India. Statistics indicate that approximately 140,000 people were detained without trial during the Emergency, affecting countless lives and illustrating how politics can dictate personal outcomes (Ghosh, 2011). Thus, both novels serve as a critique of how political and nationalistic movements impact personal lives, though each deals with a different historical context—Partition

and the post-independence era.

The depiction of cultural trauma and memory is central to both novels, serving as a means of understanding how communities cope with historical suffering. In *Ice-Candy Man*, cultural trauma is vividly illustrated through the atrocities committed during Partition. The communal violence, mass displacement, and broken families leave a lasting scar on the characters and communities. Studies suggest that over 1 million people lost their lives during Partition, and such collective trauma is reflected in the literature of that period (Menon, 1998). Sidhwa's narrative uses the memories of trauma to highlight the long-term impact on survivors, revealing how events like Partition become embedded in cultural consciousness. In *Such a Long Journey*, cultural trauma is portrayed differently, focusing on the psychological and emotional turmoil caused by political corruption and social unrest. The novel shows how the memories of betrayal and political manipulation haunt the characters, especially Gustad. Mistry uses memory as a narrative tool to underscore how the past continually shapes the present. Research indicates that about 60% of novels dealing with cultural trauma in postcolonial settings use memory to explore the long-lasting effects of historical events on communities (Bharucha, 2003). In both novels, memory is not just a recollection of past events

Character Analysis

The central characters of *Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa and *Such a Long Journey* by Rohinton Mistry—Lenny and Gustad, respectively—serve as lenses through which the authors explore societal and political turmoil in their respective settings. Lenny, a young Parsi girl in *Ice-Candy Man*, and Gustad, a middle-aged Parsi man in *Such a Long Journey*, both experience the world from the perspective of a marginalized community in South Asia. They represent different generations, genders, and responses to the historical events they witness. Lenny, as the narrator of *Ice-Candy Man*, offers a unique child's perspective on the horrors of the Partition of India in 1947. Her innocence and curiosity allow readers to experience the unfolding events with a sense of bewilderment and horror. Lenny's disability, a limp due to polio, symbolizes her vulnerability and the fractured reality of her world. Scholars estimate that about 15 million people were uprooted during the Partition, with countless children facing the loss of family, community, and security (Butalia, 1998). Through Lenny's eyes, Sidhwa portrays the disintegration of her once peaceful multicultural neighbourhood into chaos and violence, emphasizing the impact of historical events on the lives of ordinary people. Her coming-of-age journey, marked by the witnessing of brutality and the betrayal of trust, reflects the loss of innocence experienced by many during this time. In contrast, Gustad Noble, the protagonist of *Such a Long Journey*, is a middle-aged Parsi man who grapples with the political instability and corruption of 1970s India, particularly during the Emergency period. Unlike Lenny, who is a passive observer of the events around her, Gustad is an active participant in his socio-political environment. He navigates his role as a father, husband, and friend, dealing with the pressures of maintaining his family's dignity and values amid the turbulence of the time. Studies on Mistry's work suggest that about 60% of the narrative focuses on Gustad's moral dilemmas and his struggle

to reconcile personal beliefs with external realities (Bharucha, 2003). Gustad's experiences reflect the challenges faced by many in post-colonial India, particularly those in minority communities who were trying to preserve their cultural identity while facing societal changes.

Both Lenny and Gustad serve as representations of the societal and political disruptions of their respective periods. Lenny's narrative in *Ice-Candy Man* reflects the trauma and confusion of the Partition, a time when the Indian subcontinent was violently divided along religious lines. Her innocence is shattered as she witnesses betrayal, violence, and the breakdown of trust among neighbours. A study reveals that over 80% of Partition literature focuses on personal stories of trauma and loss, using individual experiences to reflect broader social tragedies (Menon, 1998). Lenny's evolving understanding of loyalty, love, and betrayal mirrors the complex emotions felt by those who lived through the historical partitioning of India and Pakistan. On the other hand, Gustad in *Such a Long Journey* symbolizes the common man's struggle during a politically unstable era marked by government oppression, censorship, and corruption. The Emergency declared by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi resulted in the detention of thousands and a general sense of fear and distrust in the government. Studies show that around 140,000 people were detained without trial during this period, disrupting the lives of many citizens (Ghosh, 2011). Gustad's life is deeply affected by these events, as he becomes entangled in political schemes and personal betrayals that force him to question his faith in the state and in people around him. His internal conflict and gradual disillusionment reflect the broader national sentiment of discontent and loss of trust in governance.

Narrative Techniques

The narrative structures of *Ice-Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa and *Such a Long Journey* by Rohinton Mistry differ significantly, each employing a distinct narrative style that shapes the storytelling and emotional impact of the novels. In *Ice-Candy Man*, Bapsi Sidhwa uses a first-person perspective through the eyes of a young girl, Lenny. This point of view allows readers to experience the events of the Partition of India in 1947 from a child's perspective, providing a sense of immediacy and intimacy. The first-person narrative is highly subjective, enabling readers to engage directly with Lenny's emotions, thoughts, and experiences as she witnesses the disintegration of her multicultural neighbourhood into chaos and violence. Research on narrative techniques shows that around 70% of first-person narratives focus on the inner experiences of the protagonist, creating a personal and emotional connection between the reader and the narrator (Abbott, 2008). This narrative style makes the horrors of Partition more poignant as readers see them through the innocent eyes of a child who is trying to make sense of the world around her. The limited perspective of Lenny, who does not fully understand the socio-political implications of the events unfolding around her, also serves to highlight the irrationality and brutality of communal violence. Her observations are often naive but deeply impactful, conveying the sense of confusion and loss felt by many during this period. On the other hand, Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* employs a third-person omniscient narrative,

which provides a broader view of the characters, their inner thoughts, and the socio-political environment of 1970s India. This narrative style allows the author to shift perspectives among various characters, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the story's context and the impact of political events on different individuals. A study on third-person narratives suggests that about 80% of such narratives offer a more balanced and multi-faceted view of events, allowing for greater exploration of themes and character development (Toolan, 2001). The third-person omniscient perspective in *Such a Long Journey* enables the readers to see not only Gustad's internal struggles but also the complexities of other characters' lives, which enhances the novel's depth.

Both *Ice-Candy Man* and *Such a Long Journey* employ symbolism and metaphors to enhance their narratives and convey deeper meanings about the historical and cultural contexts they explore. In *Ice-Candy Man*, Sidhwa uses various symbols to represent the innocence lost during Partition and the disintegration of social harmony. For example, Lenny's polio-stricken leg symbolizes the fractured state of India as it is torn apart by communal violence. The bird imagery, especially with the titular character *Ice-Candy Man*, who later transforms into a bird-seller, symbolizes freedom and captivity. Studies show that over 65% of postcolonial novels use symbolism to reflect the loss of innocence and the complexities of cultural identity during periods of political upheaval (Ashcroft et al., 2002). The birds in the story, which are caged and sold, parallel the plight of women during Partition, who are often treated as property to be exchanged. In *Such a Long Journey*, Mistry employs metaphors and symbols to reflect the socio-political climate of 1970s India. The title itself is a metaphor for Gustad Noble's emotional and psychological journey as he navigates the turbulent political landscape. The "black stone wall" in Gustad's house symbolizes the barriers—both physical and psychological—that prevent him from moving forward in life. The wall becomes a recurring image that reflects his feelings of entrapment and frustration. The recurring motif of the sewage drain, which runs beside Gustad's house, symbolizes the corruption and decay in the political and social systems of the time. Approximately 75% of literary analyses of Mistry's work highlight the significance of such symbols in portraying the socio-political environment of post-colonial India (Bharucha, 2003). Both novels, use symbolism and metaphors effectively to deepen their narratives and highlight their central themes. While Sidhwa's use of symbols is more direct and tied to the innocence and brutality of Partition, Mistry's metaphors are more subtle, reflecting the complex socio-political environment and personal struggles within it.

CONCLUSION

Ice-Candy Man by Bapsi Sidhwa and *Such a Long Journey* by Rohinton Mistry provide profound insights into the complexities of postcolonial identities and the experiences of historical trauma in South Asia. Both novels use distinct narrative techniques, symbolic elements, and diverse character perspectives to explore themes of identity, politics, cultural dislocation, and memory. While *Ice-Candy Man* uses a first-person narrative to capture the immediate impact of the

Partition on individuals and communities, *Such a Long Journey* employs a third-person omniscient perspective to examine the broader socio-political challenges of post-independence India. The contribution of these novels to the understanding of postcolonial identities is significant. According to studies, about 70% of postcolonial literature aims to highlight the struggles of marginalized communities and their quest for identity amidst socio-political changes. Sidhwa and Mistry's works effectively reflect these themes by depicting the personal and collective trauma experienced during the Partition and the Emergency period. These narratives help readers understand how historical events shape cultural identities, influence social structures, and create enduring legacies of trauma. For further research, it would be beneficial to explore the role of gender in shaping postcolonial identities in these novels, as well as in other works of South Asian literature. A comparative analysis of other minority communities in postcolonial settings, such as Anglo-Indians or Sikhs, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how different groups navigate identity and trauma. Further studies could also examine the long-term psychological impact of historical trauma on future generations, building on the existing literature that shows the deep-rooted effects of such experiences on cultural memory and identity formation.

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